

PROCEEDINGS OF THE HISTORIC CONSERVATION BOARD

MONDAY, June 10, 2002

3:00 P.M., J. MARTIN GRIESEL ROOM, CENTENNIAL PLAZA II

The Historic Conservation Board met at 3:00 P.M., in the J. Martin Griesel Room, Centennial Plaza II, with members, Borys, Clement, Kreider, Raser, Senhauser, Spraul-Schmidt, and Wallace present. Absent: Bloomfield, Sullebarger.

MINUTES

The minutes of the Monday, May 6, 2002 meeting were approved (motion by Spraul-Schmidt, second by Borys) as amended.

The minutes of the Monday, May 20, 2002 meeting were approved (motion by Spraul-Schmidt, second by Clement).

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS 1525 ELM STREET, OVER-THE-RHINE (SOUTH) HISTORIC DISTRICT

Staff member Adrienne Cowden presented the staff report on this request for a Certificate of Appropriateness to install an exterior ADA ramp and to renovate the exterior plazas at the Elm Street Clinic, located at 1525 Elm Street.

Applicant Dan Montgomery of SFA Architects was present at the pre-hearing that was held on June 4, 2002. No other individuals appeared at the meeting and staff received no comments or inquiries about the application.

Ms. Cowden stated that the applicant proposes to replace the existing brick and concrete of the east and west plazas with impressed concrete. Ms. Cowden explained that the plaza will be in the pattern of gray fieldstone with a red brick border. The renovation would involve the removal of existing ginkgo trees, to be replaced with a different type of tree. The design of the east plaza does not currently include planting new trees; however, Ms. Cowden added that the applicant indicated they would be amenable to including them.

The district guidelines do not specifically address plazas. Under new construction, appropriate paving materials are specified, and limit the use of concrete to sidewalks and not to be used in large slabs. No photographs could be obtained showing the present paved plaza, however; it is likely that the plaza pre-dates the historic district. Ms. Cowden described the proposed impressed concrete as appropriate and the use mitigated since the plazas are pre-existing elements.

An exterior ADA ramp on the west elevation is being proposed to replace an interior vertical lift, which has to be operated by security personnel, has required emergency maintenance, and is not conducive to strollers. The proposed ramp includes the creation of a new doorway on the elevated first floor between an existing entryway and window opening. Ms. Cowden pointed out that the finish materials of the proposed ramp are compatible with the building and the proposed location is appropriate. However, cutting through masonry to create a new entryway is

unnecessary and that, in addition to the massing of the proposed ramp, dramatically alters the rhythm of the façade.

In response to questions from the Board, Ms. Cowden stated that she had seen no alternative plans to the placement of the exterior ramp, but added that the ramp could not be placed further to the north due to the location of a transformer.

Applicant/Architect Dan Montgomery and Steven Toon from the Elm Street Clinic were present to answer questions from the Board. Mr. Montgomery stated that the proposed ramp is 36" wide from rail to rail and that the slope is 1 - 12. He also explained that they arrived at the design creating a new opening and exterior walkway because space is at a premium within the building and no one wanted to give up square footage. Mr. Raser questioned if alternative designs for the ramp had been considered. Mr. Montgomery stated they looked at the loading dock on the side, but it was not seriously considered since they receive shipments every other day, trucks could possibly impede access and they were not comfortable with people in the basement area. He stated they considered other locations, but concluded that proposed one was the most appropriate. In response to Ms. Wallace, Mr. Montgomery explained that parking for the facility is located next to the secondary entrance and proposed ramp.

There was discussion regarding the staff recommendation to modify the existing window located in the community room for the ramp entrance. Mr. Kreider questioned if the loss of a small part of the community room next the closet was a material detriment to the room. Mr. Toon stated that the space is used for four to five desks, but they could feasibly rearrange the desks in the smaller space.

There was consensus by the Board that the proposed ramp was massive and not sympathetic to the apertures of the building. Alternative designs were discussed including starting the lower side of the ramp near the existing door so it would coincide with an enlarged opening of an existing window, eliminating the necessity of creating another hole in the wall. The high wall would then face the transformer and loading dock. Ms. Clement suggested rather than having a compact ramp which is not inviting in terms of use, building the ramp into the environment, incorporating it more into the plaza. Another option was to reduce the mass of the ramp base; however, Mr. Montgomery commented that providing open areas underneath the ramp provides space that could be utilized by drug abusers. Ms. Borys also suggested that the base of the ramp might be kept off the face of the building. The Board concluded that there are alternative designs that would be more sympathetic to the building, surrounding doorways, terrain, and other site features including the transformer, plaza, and loading dock.

BOARD ACTION

The Board voted unanimously (motion by Kreider, second by Spraul-Schmidt) to table the item to allow the Applicant time to modify the design for the exterior ADA ramp.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS 1148-1150 MAIN STREET, OVER-THE-RHINE (SOUTH) HISTORIC DISTRICT

Staff member Caroline Kellam presented the staff report for a Certificate of Appropriateness for the installation of replacement windows in the building located at 1148 – 1150 Main Street. The building, which is located on the northeast corner of Main and East 12th Streets, is a contributing building to the Over-the-Rhine (South) Historic District.

Ms. Kellam explained that, although the windows were replaced and or repaired approximately 12-14 years ago, all of the windows are now in disrepair and lack energy efficiency. The applicant proposes to replace all of the windows with Gilkey 6/6 double hung, vinyl windows with an applied exterior grid. Ms. Kellam stated that the applicable guidelines indicate a preference for wood windows; however, vinyl clad windows are not prohibited. She also stated that the preference would be for true divided light.

Robert Schneider, owner, and Gene Wilson, from Gilkey Windows were present to answer questions from the Board. Mr. Wilson presented a sample 6/6 double hung window which he said was preferred (in other jurisdictions) for older buildings since, from the exterior, it gave the look of having a storm window. He informed the Board that the windows come in two depths – 4 9/16" and 3 1/2". He stated that the 4 9/16" are simpler in that the screen channel is integrated into the frame. The walls of the building are thick enough to go with either depth. In response to the Board's question, Mr. Schneider stated the cost to replace all the windows with vinyl clad would be approximately \$54,000; to replace with vinyl would about \$30,000. Mr. Schneider also informed the Board that although the applied grid is mounted from the exterior, it is permanent.

Ms. Borys commented that at the time the guidelines were written the appearance and dimensions of vinyl windows were unlike those of wood sash. There has been considerable technological improvement in vinyl replacement windows, so today's choices are compatible. Mr. Senhauser agreed that the appearance of the replacement window may be more important than the material in this instance.

The Board agreed that much of the character of the building comes from the windows. The line of detail and transparency provided by the 6/6 double hung windows defines the scale and detail of the building. The Board expressed that their primary concern was that the profile of the window would not remain the same. They questioned the resulting look of the frame and whether the detail of the 6/6 double hung windows could be retained with simulated grid. Mr. Wilson explained how the windows are installed and assured the Board that the existing brick molding would remain. In addition, he stated that Mr. Schneider wanted a screen so the windows could be operated. Mr. Raser pointed out that screens would not block the shadow line as much as a storm window.

The Board also expressed concern with the use of low e glass, which they thought could be reflective and affect the transparency. Mr. Schneider felt the use of low e would be most important on the front of the building since it gets the most exposure.

BOARD ACTION

The Board voted unanimously (motion by Kreider, second by Raser) to take the following actions:

1. Find that the existing windows are in disrepair and require replacement and that the cost of wood replacement windows with a true divided light are prohibitively expensive; and
2. Approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the installation of 4 9/16", 6/6 double hung, vinyl or vinyl clad replacement windows with clear glass or soft coat low e, with the condition that the existing brick molding is retained upon installation and that a window sample be submitted to the Urban Conservator to determine that the replacement window has the appearance of the original windows and the exterior applied mullion has the appearance of a true divided sash.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS AND ZONING VARIANCE, 1105 ELM STREET, OVER-THE-RHINE (SOUTH) HISTORIC DISTRICT

Staff member Adrienne Cowden presented the staff report for a Certificate of Appropriateness and appropriate zoning variances for the installation of banners at the YMCA located at 1105 Elm Street.

Ms. Cowden explained that the applicant is proposing to install eight 15' x 5 banners with red, black and white text and graphics on the east and south elevations. The four banners reading "YMCA of Greater Cincinnati" will be permanent and four announcing the 150th anniversary will be removed after December 2003.

A pre-hearing meeting was held on June 5, 2002 with Jacqueline Mathews, Director of Communications for the YMCA, present. Staff received no comments or inquiries about the application.

Ms. Cowden informed the Board that the banners do not comply with the specific language of the historic district guidelines in that they partially obscure the arched opening and appear above the first story. In addition, the Board typically has approved signage equal to one square foot per foot of frontage and four banners would exceed this calculation. Ms. Cowden described two zoning issues to be considered regarding the size and number of banners. The building has three existing signs. While the zoning code allows for an additional sign, it restricts the size to a maximum of 12 square feet. The addition of eight banners with a size of 75 square feet significantly exceeds these restrictions.

However, Ms. Cowden considered that the proposed banners would not damage the historic fabric, and would be appropriately sited and scaled, given the raised foundation and 100' and 172' frontages on Elm and Central Parkway. Therefore, she recommended granting the required variance, reiterating that four of the banners would be removed after December 2003.

Jackie Mathews of the YMCA was present to respond to questions from the Board. Ms. Mathews explained that the YMCA is beginning its 150th anniversary campaign in September and will also be participating in the City's banner program. They also intend to bring attention the grand opening of their new facility in the West End. She informed the Board that they intend to take down the three existing YMCA signs, so the banners will be the only signage. After 2004, they will remove the four 150th anniversary banners and associated hardware. She stated that they understand that they would have to come back for Board approval if they proposed any new banners.

Ms. Borys expressed some concern with the Elm Street façade being slightly crowded with existing features and questioned where the remaining four banners would be placed after 2003. Ms. Cowden pointed out figure 5 of the staff report that shows where the permanent banners will be placed. Mr. Senhauser emphasized the importance of looking at the original coloration of the building when considering the color of the banners, pointing out that it is a corner building, with significant visibility and presence.

BOARD ACTION

The Board voted unanimously (motion by Borys, second by Kreider) to take the following actions:

1. Approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the installation of the banners as proposed with the following conditions:
 - a) The four banners announcing the 150th anniversary of the YMCA must be removed by the first week in January 2004. Any new banners to be installed after this time must receive a COA and a building permit;
 - b) Four YMCA of Greater Cincinnati banners, one at each corner of the south and east elevations, will be retained as permanent signage;
 - c) Once the banners show signs of wear, including but not limited to fading, tears, rips, or holes, they must be replaced with an exact duplicate; and
 - d) No additional banners or signage can be installed on the building while any of the eight banners or associated hardware remains in place.
2. Grant approval of a variance for the size and number of proposed banners to permit the installation of the proposed banners as specified in Recommendation #1, finding that such relief from the literal implication of the Zoning Code:
 - a) Is necessary and appropriate in the interest of historic conservation so as not to adversely affect the historic architectural or aesthetic integrity of the district; and
 - b) Will not be materially detrimental to the public health, safety, and welfare or injurious to the property in the district or vicinity where the property is located.

ADJOURNMENT

As there were no other items for consideration by the Board, the meeting adjourned.

William L. Forwood
Urban Conservator

John C. Senhauser
Chairman

Date